

NEWS RELEASE



STATE OF ALABAMA

Department of

Labor

News For Immediate Release

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NEW STATE ELEVATOR SAFETY RULES GO INTO EFFECT

Alabama Wednesday joined a growing list of states requiring state safety inspections on new and existing elevators.

Previously, only Birmingham conducted elevator safety certifications.

The action followed a 30-day public comment period on new elevator and escalator safety inspection rules and regulations proposed by the State Elevator Safety Review Board created by the Legislature last year. Alabama becomes the 44th state in the nation to adopt a safety code for lifting devices.

"Elevators and escalators transport more passengers per day than all other forms of transportation put together," State Labor Commissioner Jim Bennett said. "People using these devices should do so with the assurance someone qualified to pass on their safety has actually looked at them."

Bennett said over 17,000 people are injured on elevators and escalators across the country each year and some 30 people are killed on them annually including workers involved in repairs and installation.

The two major causes of deaths are falls and being caught in between moving parts of escalators or elevators. Incidents where workers are in or on elevators or platforms that collapse, are struck by elevators or counterweights or are electrocuted are also numerous.

Beginning Monday all new elevator installations let to contract must meet state certification standards. Existing elevators will be inspected annually.

The program is paid for by state inspection fees and will not draw on the ailing state general fund.

“This is a major step forward in protecting an unsuspecting public from accidents than can be avoided,” Bennett added. “Escalators and elevators are potential sources of serious injuries to the general public and to workers installing and maintaining them.”

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 207 deaths in the 10 year period from 1992-2001. Of these, 146 involved work on or near elevators and 61 of those killed were elevator passengers. In addition, the BLS reported five deaths due to escalators during the period.

For more information, visit the State Labor Department’s web page, www.alalabor.state.al.us or call Ralph Pate, head of Alabama’s Elevator Safety Inspections Program, at 334/242-3460.